

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 USBERL 01518 01 OF 02 261424Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 ACDA-12 HA-05 /096 W
-----044891 261450Z /43

R 261346Z JUN 78
FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7132
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO
CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USELMLO BEL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1518

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV BQG
SUBJ: FLURRY OF ESCAPEES DRAWS ATTENTION

REF: (A) BERLIN 04138 DTG 201623Z JUN 78 AND BERLIN 04114
DTG 191640Z JUN 78, (B) USBERLIN 0855 DTG 121625Z
APR 78, (C) BONN 2627 DTG 101643Z FEB 78, (D) BONN 11158
DTG 161801Z JUN 78, (E) BONN 11165 DTG 161910Z JUN 78

SUMMARY: RECENT SHOOTING INVOLVING AT LEAST ONE SOVIET
SOLDIER IN EAST BERLIN HAS LED TO SPECULATION AN ESCAPE
WAS INTENDED. THIS STORY, AS WELL AS OTHER RECENT
DRAMATIC ESCAPES, OCCUR AS THE GDR CONTINUES TO CONDEMN
EXFILTRATION IN STEADY STREAM OF MEDIA REPORTS. MOREOVER,
HONECKER HAS SAID EXFILTRATION HAS REACHED "THREATENING
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PAGE 02 USBERL 01518 01 OF 02 261424Z

PROPORTIONS." SO FAR, GERMANS HAVE NOT BACKED UP
THEIR WORDS WITH ACTIONS. HOWEVER, FURTHER WIDELY
PUBLICIZED ESCAPES COULD PROVOKE ACTIONS WHICH WOULD
AFFECT INTER-GERMAN RELATIONS AND COULD BRING ALLIES
INTO PLAY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SHOOTOUT IN EAST BERLIN (REF A) HAS PROVOKED

SPECULATION THAT THE SOVIET SOLDIER, OR SOLDIERS, INVOLVED WERE SEEKING TO ESCAPE AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE, WHICH IS ONE KILOMETER SOUTH OF THE SCENE OF THE INCIDENT. THE INCIDENT HAS ALSO PRODUCED RETROSPECTIVE PRESS COMMENT ON TWO RECENT ESCAPES BY EAST GERMAN BORDER GUARDS ON JUNE 11 AND JUNE 17. BOTH GUARDS ESCAPED AT PRECISELY THE SAME LOCATION INTO BRITISH SECTOR NEAR THE EXCLAVE FICHTEWIESE. THIS EXCLAVE CONTAINS SMALL GARDENS BELONGING TO WEST BERLINERS WHO, WITH SPECIAL GDR PASSES, CAN GO THROUGH A GATE IN THE BERLIN WALL AND CROSS A FEW METERS OF GROUND TO THEIR HOLDINGS IN THE EXCLAVE. IN BOTH CASES, GUARDS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHECKING PASSES AT THE WALL DARTED THROUGH THE DOOR INTO THE BRITISH SECTOR. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT AFTER THE FIRST ESCAPE, THE ENTIRE COMPANY OF EAST GERMAN BORDER GUARDS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AREA IN QUESTION WAS RELIEVED FROM DUTY. SECOND ESCAPEE CAME FROM NEW COMPANY. IN NEITHER CASE WAS THE ESCAPEE FIRED ON BY HIS FELLOWS.

2. ALSO DRAWING PRESS ATTENTION IN RECENT DAYS WAS ESCAPE BY TWO EAST GERMANS WHO BEFRIENDED A BELGIAN DIPLOMAT ASSIGNED IN EAST BERLIN, RENDERED HIM UNCONSCIOUS BY MEANS WHICH REMAIN UNCLEAR, ALTERED HIS IDENTITY PAPERS, AND USED HIS DIPLOMATICALLY LICENSED CAR TO ESCAPE TO WEST BERLIN. BERLIN POLICE HAVE REPORTED TO US THAT ESCAPE TOOK PLACE AT SANDKRUG BRIDGE (BRITISH SECTOR)
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PAGE 03 USBERL 01518 01 OF 02 261424Z

WHEREAS PRESS SAYS ESCAPE ROUTE WAS CHECKPOINT CHARLIE.

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PAGE 01 USBERL 01518 02 OF 02 261436Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 1518

3. THESE RECENT DRAMTIC ESCAPES, TOGETHER WITH THAT OF THE TWO BROTHERS WHO ESCAPED IN AN AIRPLANE TO GATOW AIRPORT IN APRIL (REF B), AND SIMILAR ESCAPE BY THREE MEN IN LIGHT AIRCRAFT TO KASSEL A FEW WEEKS AGO, HAVE KEPT PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE CONTINUING FLOW OF PEOPLE WHO RISK THEIR LIVES TO GET OUT OF THE GDR. THESE STORIES HAVE BEEN PLAYED AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF SEVERAL MONTHS OF REGULAR (AT TIMES DAILY) REPORTING IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND AND OTHER EAST GERMAN PRESS ORGANS ABOUT "MISUSE OF THE TRANSIT ROUTES", ARRESTS OF PERSONS SEEKING TO ESCAPE, AND SENTENCING OF OTHERS. MENTIONED AGAIN WITH REGULARITY BY THE GDR PRESS ARE THE ALLEGED LEADERS OF SEVERAL EXFILTRATION RINGS (MIERENDORFF, VOELKER) WHO PREVIOUSLY HAVE BEEN ATTACKED BY THE GDR. THE FLOW OF GDR PUBLICITY ON EXFILTRATION RESUMED IN APRIL AFTER A PERIOD CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 USBERL 01518 02 OF 02 261436Z

OF SILENCE APPARENTLY INDUCED BY WISCHNEWSKI'S UNDERTAKINGS ON FRG EXFILTRATION COUNTERMEASURES DURING HIS VISIT TO EAST BERLIN FEBRUARY 7 (REF C). EAST GERMAN REPORTAGE, WHEN IT FIRST APPEARED, SEEMED MERELY ANOTHER OF THE GDR'S PERIODIC CAMPAIGNS TO WARN OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF ESCAPE ASSISTANCE. ALTHOUGH THE FRG HAS RESUMED ITS PRESSURE ON THE THREE ALLIES TO BE MORE EXPLICIT IN SUPPORTING FRG COUNTER-EXFILTRATION MEASURES (REF D), BERLIN SENAT HAS NOT NOTED A SIGNIFICANT PATTERN OF INCREASES IN THE FREQUENCY OF ARRESTS. OUR FIGURES OF THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES ARRIVING HERE DO NOT SHOW A CLEAR PATTERN; THE NUMBERS HAVE INCREASED SINCE EARLY IN THE YEAR, BUT THERE IS NORMALLY A SEASONAL INCREASE WHEN WARMER WEATHER ARRIVES, AND THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES THIS SPRING HAS BEEN NOTICEABLY LESS THAN THE NUMBER DURING THE SAME PERIOD A YEAR AGO. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRESS CAMPAIGN HAS CONTINUED. MOREOVER, HONECKER DEEMED SUBJECT OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO RAISE IT WITH GAUS IN THE JUNE 13 MEETING WHERE HE SAID "MISUSE OF THE TRANSIT WAYS" HAD CONTINUED TO INCREASE AND HAD REACHED

"THREATENING PROPORTIONS" (REF E).

4. COMMENT: TO DATE THE NERVOUSNESS AND CONCERN OF EAST GERMAN AUTHORITIES HAS MERELY BEEN REFLECTED IN WORDS, AND MAY NOT GO BEYOND THAT, BUT SHOULD FURTHER DRAMATIC ESCAPES OCCUR AND/OR FLURRY OF PUBLICITY STRETCH INTO THE SUMMER, THE EAST GERMANS COULD BE COMPELLED TO TAKE SOME MORE DRASTIC ACTIONS SUCH AS IMPOSING STRICTER CONTROLS ON DIPLOMATIC AND OTHER TRAVELLERS TO AND FROM THE SOVIET SECTOR OF BERLIN AND/OR A DEMONSTRATIVE INCREASE IN GUARDS ALONG THE GDR-BERLIN BORDER AND THE SECTOR-SECTOR BOUNDARY. WHETHER THE GDR WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO INCREASE THE USE OF FIREARMS AT THE WALL IS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 USBERL 01518 02 OF 02 261436Z

PURELY A MATTER FOR SPECULATION. WE TEND TO DOUBT THE EAST GERMANS WOULD RESORT TO SUCH DRASTIC ACTION. THE LAST TIME IT PERMITTED ITS BORDER PERSONNEL THE RATHER INDISCRIMINATE USE OF FIREARMS (1973), THE SERIOUS SHOOTING INCIDENTS WHICH RESULTED PLACED THE EAST GERMAN REGIME IN A HIGHLY UNFAVORABLE LIGHT.

5. USCOB CONCURS.DAVIS

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